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Gold King Mine Spill

Region 6 Response Strategy

To ensure pre-impact samples were collected, EPA Region 6 requested EPA Region 8 to collect samples in New Mexico on August 6, 2015. As a result, Region 8 collected two pre-impact samples the evening of August 6. The samples were taken on the Animas River, at the first accessible location south of the Colorado/New Mexico border and at the northern most drinking water intake for the city of Aztec.

NMED worked with some of their drinking water system operators in the towns of Aztec and Farmington, NM to collect water samples at their intakes. EPA will take custody of the samples for laboratory analysis.

The evening of August 6, 2015, Region 6 mobilized 2 START contractors from removal site in Grants, New Mexico, to Farmington, NM to have them on the ground to initiate sampling early morning August 7.

The morning of August 7, 2015, Region 6 deployed an OSC and 4 additional START resources from Dallas, to New Mexico. They are expected to arrive in Farmington the afternoon of August 7. As of 12:15 pm CST, the OSC is in route between Albuquerque and Farmington, New Mexico with an ETA of 1:00 pm Mountain Time/ 2:00 pm CST.

There are a total of 9 drinking water intakes for 5 drinking water systems. We will collect samples at each location. The Region 6 strategy is to collect water samples from the southernmost intake in Farmington to the northernmost intake in Aztec. We are analyzing for metals, mercury and taking field pH readings. This matches the sampling activities of Region 8.

Region 6 is coordinating water sample locations with NMED. Water Quality Division is gathering baseline and historical water quality data to aid decision making.

The State of New Mexico has issued a general advisory to all water users for the Animas River.

Region 6 will continue to coordinate with EPA regions 8 and 9, NMED and other federal agencies like the Fish and Wildlife Service.